

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----022430 171618Z /40

R 171059Z NOV 77
FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1775
INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY RABAT
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
AMEMBASSY TUNIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CAIRO 19147

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PBOR MO AG EG MR
SUBJ: VP MUBARAK ON HIS MEDIATION EFFORT RE WESTERN SHARA

REF: (A) STATE 271278 (NOTAL) (B) CAIRO 18990

SUMMARY: MUBARAK PROVIDED DETAILED ACCOUNT OF HIS RECENT VISITS TO MOROCCO, ALGERIA, MAURITANIA AND FRANCE IN CONNECTION WITH WESTERN SHARA MEDIATION. CLAIMS KING HASSAN FLEXIBLE, BUT UNWILLING ACCEPT ALGERIAN DEMANDS. HASSAN PREPARED, HOWEVER, TO COOPERATE WITH TEAM OF ARAB/AFRICAN HEADS OF STATE TO MEDIATE DISPUTE. IF NECESSARY, HASSAN WILL FIGHT AND ALGERIANS LIKELY BE BESTED. BOUMEDIENNE AND BOUTEFLIKA HARD-NOSED AND BELLIGERENT. DENIED ANY ALGERIAN SOLDIERS INVOLVED IN ATTACKS ON MOROCCAN POSITIONS IN WEST SAHARA AND INSISTED ACTION CONDUCTED ENTIRELY BY SAHROUIS. DESCRIBED SAHROUIS IN TANDOUF AS "REFUGEES". ALGERIANS REFUSED ARAB/AFRICAN HEADS OF STATE MEDIATION, INSISTING INSTEAD ON OAU MEDIATION. ALGERIANS CONCERNED
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ABOUT FRENCH INTENTIONS AND ASKED EGYPTIANS RESTRAIN FRENCH. MAURITANIAN LEADER OULD DADDAH ACKNOWLEDGED WEAKNESS, BUT REFUSED YIELD TO ALGERIANS. HE REQUESTED SHIPMENT MACHINE GUNS FROM EGYPT, WHICH ARE BEING SENT. AS RESULT HASSAN'S INTERVENTION, FRENCH PRESIDENT GISCARD AGREED HAVE GUIRINGAUD MEET WITH MUBARAK AT PARIS AIR-FIELD. GUIRINGAUD ASSURED MUBARAK FRENCH DO NOT INTEND

ATTACH ALGERIAN, BUT GUIRINGAUD PLEASED ABOUT ALGERIAN EDGINESS ON THIS SCORE. MUBARAK PRESSED BOUMEDIENNE TO RESTRAIN SAHROUIS LEST THEY EMBROIL HIM IN COSTLY WAR. NO IMMEDIATE PLANS RESUME GOE MEDIATION EFFORT. END SUMMARY.

1. MET WITH VP MUBARAK, NOVEMBER 16, FOR ABOUT AN HOUR TO HEAR ACCOUNT OF HIS RECENT MAGHREBIAN MEDIATION MEISSION RE WESTERN SAHRAA. HE WAS AWAY ABOUT FIVE DAYS AND RETURNED ONLY NOVEMBER 15.

2. FIRST VISIT TO MOROCCO, NOVEMBER 10-12: FOLLOWING HIS ARRIVAL IN RABAT, NOVEMBER 10, MUBARAK DECIDED DEFER REQUEST FOR AUDIENCE WITH KING HASSAN UNTIL AFTER LATTER'S PRESS CONFERENCE. IN THAT PRESS CONFERENCE, AS MUBARAK READ IT, HASSAN HAD HINTED AT POSSIBILITY MOROCCAN MILITARY ACTION AGAINST TANDOUF, WHERE LARGE NUMBER SAHROUIS ENCAMPED. HASSAN TOLD MUBARAK HE READY TO "OPEN DOORS" TO THE ALGERIANS. HE EVEN PREPARED SHARE ANY MINERAL WEALTH THAT MIGHT BE FOUND IN THE WESTERN SAHARA AMONG MOROCCO, MAURITANIAN AND ALGERIA AND TO GRANT PORT FACILITIES AND TRANSIT FACILITIES THROUGH MOROCCAN TERRITORY FOR ANY RAILROAD THAT ALGERIANS MIGHT WISH CONSTRUCT TO EXPORT THEIR PRODUCTS FROM MOROCCAN ATLANTIC PORTS. HE WAS NOT, HOWEVER, PREPARED ACCEPT ALGERIAN VIEWS ON THE SAHARA ISSUE AND CONFIDENTIAL

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REITERATED HARDLINE MOROCCAN POSITION THAT MUBARAK SAID HE FIRST HEARD IN 1975. HASSAN AGREED TO EGYPTIAN PROPOSAL THAT GROUP OF ARAB/AFRICAN HEADS OF STATE BE DESIGNATED TO MEDIATE THE DISPUTE. IN MUBARAK'S VIEW, KING HASSAN SHOWED CONSIDERABLE FLEXIBILITY.

3. VISIT TO ALGIERS, NOVEMBER 12-13: IN ALGIERS, MUBARAK RELATED, BOUTEFLIKA, WHO HAD JUST RETURNED FROM NEW YORK, INSISTED ON ATTENDING MEETING WITH BOUMEDIENNE. MUBARAK EMPHASIZED TO ALGERIAN LEADERS THAT WESTERN SAHARA PROBLEM "DANGEROUS." BOTH ALGERIA AND MOROCCO ARE UNDERTAKING MILITARY PREPARATIONS. IF BOTH PERSIST, ARMED CONFRONTATION INEVITABLE. ANY SUCH HOSTILITIES WILL COST BOTH COUNTRIES, AND ESPECIALLY ALGERIA, DEARLY IN MEN AND TREASURE. THEY WILL SUFFER ECONOMICALLY. IN THIS CONNECTION MUBARAK REMINDED ALGERIAN LEADERS ORE REASONS FOR EGYPT'S PROSTRATE ECONOMY.

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
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R 171059Z NOV 77
FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1776
INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY RABAT
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4. BOUMEDIENNE WAS HARDNOSED. NOTHING KING HASSAN CHARGE THAT ALGERIANS INVOLVED IN ATTACKS ON MOROCCO POSITIONS, BOUMEDIENNE DENIED THIS WAS SO, INSISTING ATTACKS PERPETRATED SOLELY BY SAHROUIS. WHEN TAXED BY MUBARAK WITH FACT THAT SAHROUIS HAVE CAMP IN TANDOUF IN ALERIAN TERRITORY, BOUMEDIENNE INSISTED THEY SIMPLY "REFUGEES". HE WOULD NOT SEND SINGLE ALGERIAN SOLDIER TO MOROCCO. MUBARAK REMINDED ALGERIAN LEADERS OF HASSAN'S WARNING THAT MOROCCAN TROOPS WILL ENGAGE IN "HOT PURSUIT" INTO ALGERIA IF NECESSARY. BOUMEDIENNE RESPONDED THIS WOULD BE CLEAR-CUT AGGRESSION AGAINST ALGERIA. MUBARAK URGED MOROCCANS NOT BE GIVEN ANY SUCH EXCUSE, BUT BOUMEDIENNE CONTINUED INSIST HE NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR SAHROUIS' ACTIONS. CLAIMED HE COULD NOT BE EXPECTED CONTROL THE SAHROUIS, WHO ARE 600 KILOMETERS AWAY.

5. MUBARAK CAUTIONED ALGERIAN LEADERS THAT, UNTIL SAHROUIS ARE CONTROLLED, THEY LIKELY TO CREATE PROBLEMS FOR ALGERIA. EVERYONE KNOWS ALGERIANS ARE BEHIND SAHROUIS.
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HE THEN TRIED OUT GOE HEADS OF STATE MEDIATION TEAM.

6. AT THIS POINT, BOUTEFLIKA INTERVENED TO REFUSE.
CLAIMED GOE ASKING ALGERIA TAKE TEN STEPS IN ONE WHEN

ALGERIA WISHED TAKE ONLY ONE STEP AT A TIME. ALGERIA, BOUTEFLIKA ASSERTED, WISHES PURSUE OAU CHANNEL. NEITHER BOUMEDIENNE NOR BOUTEFLIKA WOULD BUDGE ON THIS POINT, DESPITE MUBARAK'S ASSURANCE THAT HASSAN WOULD BE AGREE-ABLE TO ARAB/AFRICAN HEADS OF STATE MEDIATION AND WILLING SHARE MINERAL WEALTH OF THE AREA. BOUMEDIENNE DENIED ANY ALGERIAN INTEREST IN MINERAL WEALTH, AND INSISTED OAU MEDIATION NECESSARY. WHEN MUBARAK POINTED OUT THAT SINCE LIBREVILLE CONFERENCE DECIDED ON OAU MEDIATION, NOTHING HAD YET BEEN CONVENED, BOUMEDIENNE SUGGESTED GOE SHOULD CONVENE OAU AND THAT THEREAFTER PERHAPS TEAM OF FIVE OR SIX ARAB/AFRICAN HEADS OF STATE. HE DID NOT WISH REVERSE THE PROCEDURE AS MUBARAK HAD SUGGESTED. MUBARAK URGED BOUMEDIENNE TO REFLECT ON THE MATTER AND DETAILED FOR HIM MILITARY CONSIDERATIONS.

7. BOUMEDIENNE, ACCORDING TO MUBARAK, WAS "TERRIFIED" OF THE FRENCH. GOE, BOUMEDIENNE ASKED, SHOULD PUBLICLY STATE ITS POSITION AND ASK FRENCH NOT TO INTERFERE. BOUMEDIENNE ALSO COMPLAINED THAT SOME ARABS, ESPECIALLY SAUDIS, ARE ASSISTING HASSAN FINANCIALLY, CONVENIENTLY IGNORING FACT THAT SIZEABLE SAUDI LOAN HAD JUST BEEN EXTENDED TO ALGERIA. ALGERIANS HAD ADVANCED NO OTHER SUGGESTIONS EXCEPT THAT EGYPTIANS SHOULD URGE THE FRENCH TO EASE THEIR PRESSURE. MUBARAK POINTED OUT THAT THIS IS DIFFICULT SO LONG AS FRENCH CITIZENS STILL BEING HELD. IN RESPONSE, BOUMEDIENNE AGAIN INSISTED THAT SAHROUIS, NOT ALGERIANS, HOLDING THEM AND THAT IT IS NOT AN ALGERIAN PROBLEM. WHEN MUBARAK SUGGESTED DVCMEIENNEE

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TELL THE SAHROUIS RELEASE CAPTURED FRENCHMEN, BOUMEDIENNE CLAIMED HE COULD NOT DO SO. HOWEVER, BOUTEFLIKA CLAIMED TO HAVE ADVISED THE SAHROUIS TO RELEASE PRISONERS AND WAS CONFIDENT THIS WOULD BE DONE. HE UNABLE SAY WHEN.

8. BOUMEDIENNE, IN MUBARAK'S ESTIMATE, BELLIGERENT AND CONSIDERS HIMSELF STRONG ENOUGH TO CHALLENGE HASSAN.

9. VISIT TO MAURITANIA, NOVEMBER 13: OULD DADDAH, WHEN APPROACHED ON SUBJECT, HAD POINTED TO MAURITANIA'S WEAKNESS. THROUGH MAURITANIAN HAS NO ARMY OR DEFENSE RESOURCES, IT REFUSES YIELD TO ALGERIANS. THE FRENCH, MUBARAK NOTED, ARE ASSISTING MARUITANIA IN IMPROVING COMMUNICATIONS. (BOUMEDIENNE HAD BEEN VERY DISTURBED ABOUT SUCH FRENCH ASSISTANCE.) OULD DADDAH REQUESTED SOME MACHINE GUNS FROM EGYPT, WHICH WILL BE SENT.

10. SECOND VISIT TO MOROCCO, NOVEMBER 13-14: BEFORE LEAVING ON HIS SECOND VISIT TO MORROCCO, MUBARAK SENT A

MESSAGE TO PARIS REQUESTING PRESIDENT GISCARD TO RECEIVE HIM. FRENCH RESPONDED BY ASKING PURPOSE OF MEETING, MIDDLE EAST OR WESTERN SAHARA. WHEN LETTER MENTIONED, GISCARD. THEREUPON MUBARAK TOLD HASSAN THAT IF HE DID NOT TRAVEL TO PARIS, EVEN IF ONLY TO AIRPORT, BOUMEDIENNE WOULD SUSPECT THAT THERE IS A COMBINED PLOT UNDER WAY AGAINST HIM. MUBARAK ASKED HASSAN INTERVENE WITH GISCARD TO AGREE TO A BRIEF PARIS AIRPORT STOPOVER, DURING WHICH SUBJECT COULD BE DISCUSSED WITH GISCARD. HASSAN DID SO AND FRENCH RESPONDED AFFIRMATIVELY.

11. VISIT TO PARIS AIRFIELD, NOVEMBER 14: MUBARAK TOLD GUIRINGAUD OF ALGERIAN FEAR THAT FRENCH MIGHT INTERVENE MILITARILY. GUIRINGAUD ASSURED MUBARAK THAT FRENCH DO NOT PLAN TO ATTACK, BUT WAS PLEASED ALGERIANS EDGY RE FRENCH INTENTION. MUBARAK URGED FRENCH NOT TO ATTACK ALGERIA, SINCE ANY SUCH ACTION WOULD BE EMBARRASSING TO GOE. CONFIDENTIAL

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EGYPTIANS, AS FELLOW ARABS, WOULD HAVE TO STAND BY ALGERIANS. HE ALSO URGED FRENCH GIVE MORE SUPPORT TO MAURITANIANS. AFTER MEETING, IT HAD BEEN AGREED TO STATE PUBLICLY THAT DISCUSSION HAD CENTERED ON MIDDLE EAST.

12. MUBARAK'S GENERAL CONCLUSION IS THAT, DESPITE BOUMEDIENNE'S HARD-NOSED ATTITUDE, HE WILL ATTEMPT TO RESTRAIN THE SAHROUIS. MUBARAK SAID GOE HAS NO PLANS AT MOMENT TO RESUME MEDIATION EFFORT. EILTS

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, VISITS, NEGOTIATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 17-Nov-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 22 May 2009
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977CAIRO19147
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770426-0518
Format: TEL
From: CAIRO
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
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Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19771149/aaaabpjm.tel
Line Count: 257
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Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
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Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 77 STATE 271278, 77 CAIRO 18990
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 22-Nov-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 554919
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: VP MUBARAK ON HIS MEDIATION EFFORT RE WESTERN SHARA
TAGS: PBOR, PDEV, MO, AG, EG, MR, WI, (MUBARAK, MUHAMMAD HUSNI), (EILTS, HERMANN F)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/4572b117-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009